



OFFICE OF
BOARD OF HEALTH
100 CENTER STREET
PEMBROKE, MASSACHUSETTS 02359

(781) 293-2718

April 28th 2009

To Whom This May Concern:

As I am sure you are by now aware, there is a situation developing with an H1N1 Virus in our country and the world. This virus commonly called "swine flu" seems to have originated in the northwestern corner of Mexico, and has spread into the United States and Europe by airline passengers.

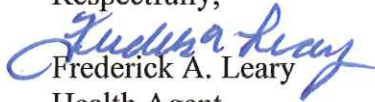
While the situation is not serious at this time, it could become problematic. As yet there have been no confirmed cases in New England, however New York City has had a cluster of 28 verified.

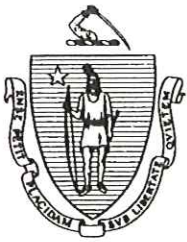
At this point the very best thing everyone can do is practice prevention. Prevention is easy if people remember ordinary sanitary measures that should be in use all the time anyway, such as "cough and sneeze etiquette". Cough or sneeze into a tissue, handkerchief or at least your own elbow (sleeve). Don't cough, sneeze or even talk right in another person's face. WASH HANDS OFTEN. Use soap, clean all parts of hands thoroughly. Wash hands for at least 30 seconds. Use hand sanitizer when applicable. BE SMART IN PUBLIC..... Think of things that can contaminate your hands and take precautions. Public door handles, shopping carriage handles, public telephones, public computer keyboards etc. can all be a source of germs.

Attached please find a "Public Health Fact sheet", Fact Sheet for Schools/daycares and a sheet to give web information sites.

As I said the situation is being closely monitored by The World Health Organization, United States Center For Disease Control, Massachusetts Department of Public Health and your local Board of Health.

Respectfully,


Frederick A. Leary
Health Agent



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Health and Human Services
Department of Public Health
250 Washington Street, Boston, MA 02108-4619

DEVAL L. PATRICK
GOVERNOR

TIMOTHY P. MURRAY
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

JUDYANN BIGBY, MD
SECRETARY

JOHN AUERBACH
COMMISSIONER

**Swine Influenza A (H1N1) Virus
Information for School and Childcare Settings
April 27, 2009**

No cases of swine influenza (H1N1), known as swine flu, have been detected in Massachusetts as of April 27, 2009. With many students and childcare attendees returning from spring vacation, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) is providing the following guidance for these settings. However, this is a rapidly evolving situation. As more information becomes available and the situation unfolds, guidance is likely to change in the upcoming days and weeks. It is important for people to stay informed by monitoring websites such as those provided below.

Attached is the DPH fact sheet on swine flu, which you should feel free to provide to parents, students and staff.

Guidance for School and Childcare Settings

At this time, DPH recommends that schools and childcare settings increase education on respiratory hygiene and monitor attendees for acute febrile respiratory illness.

Staff and children (as developmentally appropriate) should all be taught and asked to follow these steps that prevent the transmission of infections such as influenza:

- Cover your coughs and sneezes into a tissue or the inside of your elbow, not into your bare hands.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
- Wash hands frequently, especially after coughing or sneezing.
- Stay home if you're sick, especially with a fever.

School or childcare participants with acute febrile respiratory illness, regardless of travel history, should be sent home according to facilities-established procedures with instructions to stay at home for least 7 days after the onset of illness or until 24 hours after their symptoms resolve, whichever is longer. Instructions should be given to seek medical care if symptoms worsen. At this time, exclusion is not recommended for school or childcare participants who have recently traveled to an area where swine flu cases have been confirmed, and who do not have symptoms.

Disease Reporting and Consultation

School nurses and student health centers should report higher than normal absenteeism to your local health department or to the DPH Epidemiology Program at 617-983-6800.

Definitions of Respiratory Illness:

1. Acute respiratory illness, defined as recent onset of at least two of the following:

- rhinorrhea (runny nose) or nasal congestion
- sore throat
- cough
- fever or feverishness

2. Influenza-like illness: fever $>37.8^{\circ}\text{C}$ (100°F) plus cough or sore throat

For More Information:

U.S. CDC Swine Influenza Website:

<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/swine/>

Infection control and treatment guidance: <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/swine/recommendations.htm>

Massachusetts-Specific Information as well as links to CDC:

<http://mass.gov/dph>

School and/or Day Care Specific Resources

All you have to do is wash your hands Podcast: This Podcast teaches children how and when to wash their hands properly.

<http://www2a.cdc.gov/podcasts/player.asp?f=11072>

Downloadable Flu Prevention Materials for Schools/Day Cares:

<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/school/>

Preventing the Spread of Influenza (the Flu) in Child Care Settings: Guidance for Administrators, Care Providers, and Other Staff: Flu recommendations for schools and child care providers <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/infectioncontrol/childcaresettings.htm>

Protecting Against the Flu: Advice for Caregivers of Children Less Than 6 Months Old:

Research has shown that children less than 5 years of age are at high risk of serious flu-related complications. <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/infantcare.htm>

Stopping Germs at Home, Work and School: Fact Sheet

http://www.cdc.gov/germstopper/home_work_school.htm

Ounce of Prevention: Tips and streaming video for parents and children about the steps and benefits of effective hand washing <http://www.cdc.gov/ounceofprevention/>

Clean Hands Saves Lives: Keeping hands clean is one of the most important steps we can take to avoid getting sick and spreading germs to others. <http://www.cdc.gov/cleanhands/>

Hand washing to reduce Disease: Recommendations to Reduce Disease Transmission from Animals in Public Settings <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/rr5605a4.htm>

BAM! Body and Mind. Teacher's Corner: In this activity, students will conduct an experiment on washing their hands. They will learn that "clean" hands may not be so clean after all and the critical importance of washing their hands as a way to prevent the spread of disease.
http://www.bam.gov/teachers/epidemiology_hand_wash.html

CDC TV - Put Your Hands Together: (Video) Scientists estimate that people are not washing their hands often or well enough and may transmit up to 80% of all infections by their hands.
<http://www.cdc.gov/CDCTV/HandsTogether/>

Cover your Cough Posters: Stop the Spread of Germs that Make You and Others Sick! Printable formats of "Cover Your Cough". Posters only available as PDF files.
<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/covercough.htm>

CDC - Be a Germ Stopper: Posters and Materials: For Community and Public Settings Like Schools and Child Care Facilities). Cover Your Cough also available for health care settings.
<http://www.cdc.gov/germstopper/materials.htm>

"It's a SNAP" Toolkit Program materials to help prevent school absenteeism activities for school administrators, teachers, students and others can do to help stop the spread of germs in schools. See the hand cleaning section of the "It's a SNAP" site at www.itsasnap.org/snap/about.asp.

Scrub Club <http://www.scrubclub.org/Kids> can learn about health and hygiene and become members of the Scrub Club(tm) at www.scrubclub.org. The site features a fun and educational animated Webisode with seven "soaper-heros" who battle nasty villains who represent germs and bacteria. Kids learn the six key steps to proper hand-washing through a webisode, hand-washing song, interactive games, and activities for kids, and educational materials for teachers are also available to download.

PUBLIC HEALTH FACT SHEET

Swine Flu

Massachusetts Department of Public Health, 250 Washington Street, Boston, MA 02108

What is swine influenza?

Swine influenza (swine flu) is a respiratory disease of pigs caused by a type of influenza virus. Outbreaks of swine flu happen regularly in pigs. People do not normally get swine flu, but human infections can and do happen. Most commonly, human cases of swine flu happen in people who are around pigs but it's possible for swine flu viruses to spread from one person to another. In the United States there were 12 cases of swine flu in people from 2006 through 2008. In March and April 2009 there have been many more cases of swine flu than usual in both Mexico and the U.S. and the infections have spread from one person to another.

What are the symptoms of swine flu in people?

Swine flu causes symptoms very similar to seasonal (or human) flu. The most common symptoms of swine flu, like seasonal flu, are fever, cough, and sore throat and can include body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Some people also have diarrhea and vomiting. There have been some people with swine flu who have been sicker and have even died.

Is swine flu treatable in people?

People sick with any type of flu should make sure to drink enough fluids, get plenty of rest, eat healthy foods, wash hands frequently and stay home to avoid spreading the flu to other people. The kinds of drugs used to treat seasonal flu, called antivirals, can also be used to treat swine flu. There have been a few influenza viruses, including the most recent swine flu, that are resistant to some, but not all, of these drugs. Healthcare providers may recommend that people who are sick or appear to be sick with swine flu receive an antiviral medication.

How would I know if I have swine flu?

If you have symptoms of influenza as described above, and especially if you have recently traveled to an area where there have been human cases of swine flu, contact your healthcare provider who will decide what type of testing and treatment is right for you. To diagnose any kind of flu virus, a swab of the inside of your nose needs to be collected by a doctor. Identification of a swine flu virus requires special laboratory testing.

If you think you might have swine flu and you need to see your health care provider, you should call ahead and let them know you might have the flu. That way, precautions can be taken to avoid the spread of flu to others.

What if I recently traveled to a region where swine flu in humans has been found?

If you have recently traveled to an area affected by swine flu, be watchful for any flu-like symptoms. If you are experiencing any of these symptoms, stay home to avoid exposing others and contact your healthcare provider; your healthcare provider will decide what type of testing and treatment is right for you. To diagnose any kind of flu virus, a swab of the inside of your nose needs to be collected by a doctor. Identification of a swine flu virus requires special laboratory testing.

How can I protect myself and others from swine flu?

You can protect yourself and others from swine flu the same way that you can protect yourself from seasonal flu. Avoid holding, hugging, kissing, or shaking hands with anyone who has a cold or the flu. Wash your hands often with soap and warm water, or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer. Avoid touching your nose, mouth or eyes. Clean things that are touched often like door handles, telephones, etc. If you get sick with a flu-like illness stay home from work and school and avoid contact with others so the virus does not spread.

All people with swine flu who are not hospitalized, and their household and other close contacts, will need to stay at home to prevent spread of illness to other people.

If I have swine flu, can I stay at home?

People with mild or moderate illness can and should be cared for at home to prevent spread. Things people who have swine flu who are cared for at home should do include:

- check with their health care provider about any special care they might need if they are pregnant or have a health condition such as diabetes, heart disease, asthma, or emphysema
- check with their health care provider about whether they should take antiviral medications
- stay home for at least 7 days after onset of illness; or until free of symptoms (including fever) for 24 hours, which ever is longer
- get plenty of rest
- drink clear fluids (such as water, broth, sports drinks, electrolyte beverages for infants) to keep from being dehydrated
- cover coughs and sneezes. Clean hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub often and especially after using tissues and after coughing or sneezing into hands.
- Never cough in the direction of someone else.
- avoid close contact with others – do not go to work or school while ill
- be watchful for emergency warning signs (see below) that might indicate you need to seek medical attention

Get medical care right away if the sick person at home:

- has difficulty breathing or chest pain
- has purple or blue discoloration of the lips
- is vomiting and unable to keep liquids down
- has signs of dehydration such as dizziness when standing, absence of urination, or in infants, a lack of tears when they cry
- has seizures (for example, uncontrolled convulsions) is less responsive than normal or becomes confused

Is there a vaccine for swine flu?

No. Right now there is no vaccine for swine flu. According to CDC, it is unlikely that the vaccine for seasonal flu will prevent swine flu.

Is it safe to cook and eat pork and pork products?

Yes. It is safe to eat properly handled and cooked pork and pork products. Swine flu viruses are not spread by food. You cannot get swine flu from eating pork or pork products.

Why is swine flu important?

Approximately every 20-40 years, a new strain of the flu virus appears which is very different from the ordinary seasonal flu virus. When this happens most people do not have immunity to this new strain of flu virus and it can spread to many people, across the world, over a short period of time. This is called an influenza pandemic. Some people think that swine flu viruses might play a role in the start of the next pandemic.

For more information about seasonal flu, pandemic flu, avian flu and swine flu, please visit the websites listed below or contact the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, Division of Epidemiology and Immunization at 617-983-6800.

- **Massachusetts Department of Public Health website on influenza**
<http://www.mass.gov/dph/flu>
- **Center for Disease Control (CDC) websites on swine flu**
<http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/>

April 27, 2009

CDC:

Main Swine Flu Web Link: <http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/>

Case Counts: <http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/investigation.htm>

Guidance and Recommendations: <http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu/recommendations>

Influenza General Resources <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/pandemic/>

Influenza OPLAN <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/pandemic/cdcplan.htm>

Info Phone Line: 1800CDCINFO (18002324636)

Key Facts: www.cdc.gov/swineflu/key_facts.htm

Seasonal Flu Overview <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/weekly/>

DHHS

Public Health Emergency Declaration: http://www.hhs.gov/secretary/phe_swh1n1.html

DHHS/Pandemic Flu.Gov

<http://www.pandemicflu.gov/index.html>

Federal and world response stages:

<http://www.pandemicflu.gov/plan/federal/fedresponsestages.html>

Use of Pneumococcal Vaccine

<http://www.pandemicflu.gov/vaccine/pneumococcal.html>

State-by-State Pandemic Planning and status:

<http://www.pandemicflu.gov/plan/states/index.html#stateplans>

World Health Organization:

Confirmed H1N1 case count:

http://www.who.int/csr/disease/avian_influenza/country/en/

Pandemic Alert System/Levels:

http://www.who.int/csr/disease/avian_influenza/phase/en/index.html

Swine Flu Page: <http://www.who.int/csr/disease/swineflu/en/index.html>